

CORRESPONDENCE

A Further Reply to Simeon Edmunds

SIR,—Having read Mr Edmunds' reply to my criticisms of his booklet on spirit photography (*Journal S.P.R.*, 44, 737) I find that certain of his challenges are themselves questionable.

First, Mr Edmunds contends that my interpretation of the general thesis of his booklet is incorrect. He rightly states that I criticized omissions of persons who held favorable views on 'spirit' photography. Mr Edmunds points out that his thesis was 'while it cannot be proved that "spirit" photography is impossible, there appears to be no real evidence to warrant rational belief in such a phenomenon.'

In fact, I also point out that Mr Edmunds disregarded not only the entire case of Ed Wyllie but Prof. James Hyslop's fascinating data with Mrs Dupont Lee. Hyslop, I might add, had quite a distaste for physical phenomena, but never-the-less was most favorable to the case. In any event I believe that Mr Edmunds' 'thesis' is more of a conclusion, and that the nature of my criticism weakens the basis for that conclusion.

However, I would like to remark upon some particulars of Mr Edmunds' reply.

For one, he refers to my pointing out that other criticisms (of his booklet) appearing in the *International Journal of Parapsychology* as an 'irrelevant matter'. I can see no logic in this statement. In fact, I find that when two independent reviewers come to a common conclusion, this matter is of extreme relevance. I might add that he refers to Mr Sheargold, who wrote the aforementioned review as 'a reviewer of unstated qualification'. Surely any material published in a respected parapsychological journal is worthy of our attention?

Later, Mr Edmunds states that he does not think that Hereward Carrington was 'a particularly critical investigator'. This is one of the most ludicrous statements I have ever read in a parapsychological journal. Need I say that Carrington's *Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism* is still held as a classic in the field of mediumistic quackery. I can think of no *more* critical investigator and feel that such a slur on Carrington as Mr Edmunds presents is typical of what I feel to be Mr Edmunds' lack of historical perspective.

In answer to Mr Edmunds' censure of Carrington's investigations into psychic photography on the sole grounds that J. Hewat

McKenzie was involved, I suggest that an experiment should be judged on the merits of its experimental plan and execution—not because a critic feels that one investigator from a committee of three (others being Carrington and Cushing) is overly prone to believe in certain alleged phenomena. It would have been more appropriate to challenge the experiments themselves, on which, I note, Mr Edmunds is very silent.¹

In answer to another charge, I am quite well aware that Fukurai's work was within the framework of 'thoughtography'. However, my reference, as was overtly pointed out, was directed towards his experiments with Hope.

I would say, in passing, that theoretically, thoughtography and spirit photography would have the same modus operandi, and that evidence for one also strengthens evidence for the other. And it is quite easy to account for 'spirit' photography on non-survivalistic hypotheses.

Concerning Mrs Deane, Mr Edmunds gives the impression that she always 'magnetized' the sitter's plates in a suspicious manner. I pointed out that this was only instituted during a certain phase of her mediumship and not with the universality Mr Edmunds implies. None the less Mr Edmunds 'fails to see' why he is 'less than fair' to Mrs Deane.

Mr Edmunds' reply on the Lord Donegall issue is quite an oversimplification of a greatly complex misunderstanding, and I suggest that any interested party read the original material to which I referred.

In the case of Mrs White, I made a return trip to her in July, 1968 with Mr Raymond Bayless. In 1955 Mr Bayless was invited by the editor of the *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research* to prepare a paper on methods of fakery in the production of spirit photography (the paper was never completed because of

¹ I showed the original draft of this letter to Mr Raymond Bayless who made the following comments (in litt) on Carrington: 'I had the great pleasure of knowing Hereward Carrington some years before his death and can testify that no more incredulous and skeptical investigator ever lived. On one occasion I was privileged to watch him work with a noted physical medium. As is common knowledge he was a skilled magician and his knowledge of mediumistic fraud was unparalleled. His knowledge, both theoretical and practical, of photographic fraud equalled his mastery of "physical" fraud. I witnessed on various occasions Carrington giving masterful demonstrations of mediumistic fakery. In spite of these accomplishments he had the personal integrity and courage to admit the existence of genuine physical phenomena. To insinuate that he was not a qualified investigator is unfounded and ridiculous—it is all too easy to attack the great dead, and such a slur does not reflect to the credit of the detractor.'

schedule complications). I regard this as an outstanding qualification. After re-evaluating the White photographs, Mr Bayless shared my conclusions that under the circumstances in which the photographs were produced, and also in view of the subject's lack of formal education, the photographs were most likely genuine. Unfortunately, there were various circumstances why Mr Bayless and I felt obliged to let the case go. I do not say that the case is 'perfect' by any means. However, under all the conditions that we encountered, it would be very hard to form a negative verdict. One cannot expect a spontaneous case to occur under the same conditions of control as an experimental one, which Mr Edmunds appears to desire.

In my letter I pointed out that mediums who are undoubtedly genuine often cheat, and urged that this point be remembered in a discussion of spirit photographers—who are, after all, physical mediums of a sort. From this, Mr Edmunds reconstructs my thesis to say that spirit photographers who cheat are thus sometimes genuine!

Mr Edmunds avers that contrary to my remark that the data of the *Society for the Study of Supernormal Pictures* is ignored, he does mention the organization and particularly that its secretary, Fred Barlow, became convinced that all spirit photography was fraudulent. While this is true, the Society's data are still ignored.

Mr Edmunds is right when he corrects my assertion that the opinions of Crookes and Barrett are not listed. But he casts doubts on the merits of their investigations by stating (p. 7 of his booklet) that they were 'seemingly more critical investigators' after casting them into the company of the Spiritualists. One can easily draw inferences from the way the paragraph was constructed.

Mr Edmunds' true thesis is both patent in his booklet (p. 15) and is re-iterated in his reply to me when he says that 'even when a spirit photographer or some other kind of "physical medium" cannot be proved fraudulent this does not mean he is therefore genuine'. Here Mr Edmunds has reserved himself a ready way out. I am sure that he is aware that such a universal criticism could be levelled at *any* medium, physical or mental, or *any* phenomenon, experimental or spontaneous. Upon such a thesis parapsychologists might as well pack up their bags and go home; there is no study, there are no phenomena. This is the logical implication of what Mr Edmunds says.

Mr Edmunds concludes that reasoned criticism is welcome. I heartily suggest that he take his own advice. He maintains that my criticisms are 'unfounded allegations' and show 'disregard' for the facts. On the basis of this reply, I maintain that Mr Edmund's

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answer to my previous letter, is like his booklet, not to be taken too seriously.

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ABSTRACT

(Fuller details of the work abstracted below may be obtained on application to the secretary, S.P.R., 1 Adam and Eve Mews, London, W.8.).

ESP AND PERSONALITY

by T. J. BRODBECK

The aim of this GESP group card-guessing experiment was to find evidence in support of the relations found in the past between card-score and (a) Sheep/Goat attitudes,¹ (b) Birth Order,² (c) Extraversion.³ Three scoring directions were checked. (0, +1, -1).

The reliability of the scores was computed,⁴ and also, since one of the characteristic differences between extraverts and introverts is the greater variability of the extravert, the reliability of introverts and extraverts was compared.

After a talk, the 34 subjects, mostly undergraduates, made four runs of 25 guesses at randomised Zener cards looked at by an agent in a separate room. Synchronization was by intercomm. Subjects also completed an E.P.I. (Form B) and answered a questionnaire.

No significant results were found in either the 0 or the -1 scoring directions. The results in the +1 direction only are quoted in the accompanying table and accordingly the *p*-values have been trebled.

¹ Schmeidler, G. R. and McConnell, R. A. *ESP and Personality Patterns*: New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1958.

² Green, C. E. 'The Effect of Birth Order and Family Size on Extra Sensory perception.' *Journal S.P.R.* 43 No., 726.

³ Eysenck, H. J. 'Personality and Extra Sensory Perception'. *Journal S.P.R.*, 44, No. 732